

# INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Germany (Russian Zone)  
SUBJECT Current Status and Party  
History of Paul Merker

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Introduction: Paul Merker has been prominently mentioned as the leader of the Noel Field conspiracy, and connections between Merker and various SED functionaries are believed to form the basis for the recently imposed purge of the Party. At the same time, there has been some speculation as to whether functionaries accused of association with Field would be victims of a show trial on the Soviet model. Removed from its conspiratorial setting, the Noel Field case is essentially a contest of strength between the Merker and Walter Ulbricht factions within the SED. For this reason, information concerning Merker's current status, his prospects of reinstatement and the reaction of the SED membership to his demotion may be of value.

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1. Paul Merker is currently employed as the manager\* of a HO restaurant called "Turmklaus" in Luckenwalde.\*\* Persons patronizing the "Turmklaus" do not come in contact with Merker. This applies particularly to a number of Party functionaries whose attempts to visit him have proved unsuccessful.
  2. Merker's direct superior, the head of the HO for the town and district of Luckenwalde, has been charged by the SED with the procurement of a single house for Merker. He and Merker have been inspecting available properties, but they have not as yet found anything suitable. As soon as a house has been located, Merker's wife Margarete (nee Menzel) and her sister will join Merker in Luckenwalde.\*\*\*
  3. The strained relations between Merker and Ulbricht, which may have been instrumental in hastening his demotion, date back to the nineteen thirties. At that time, Merker was in charge of the Trade Union Section of the KPD and was a leading functionary of the Revolutionaere Gewerkschafts-Oppektion (RGO). Relations between Merker and Walter Ulbricht, Heinz Neumann, and others progressively deteriorated until, in 1930, Merker found himself in open opposition to the Central Committee of the KPD. At that time, there was ample evidence that Merker

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was no match for Ulbricht's intrigues. Ulbricht benefited from his excellent relations with the EKKI of the Comintern, which gave him advance notice of all impending shifts in Moscow's tactical line concerning German problems.

4. At the time Merker went into opposition, he was forced to rely on the support of the subdistrict Zentrum of the KPD, Berlin, which embraced the membership in the important boroughs of Mitte (the heart of Berlin) and Kreuzberg. With the exception of these districts, Merker had no support from any of the larger Party units in the Reich. The subdistrict Zentrum, however, was the largest within the Berlin Party organization, and it included representatives from the printing trade, newspaper publishing firms, medium-size metal-producing plants, banks, and insurance companies. When the majority of the Central Committee under the leadership of Ulbricht decided to oust Merker from the Party, the secretariat of subdistrict Zentrum, through its leading functionary, Party Secretary Werner Peuke, sent a telegram to Stalin in behalf of the Communist shop councils of approximately 100 firms in the district, requesting the EKKI not to comply with a request for Merker's expulsion. As it was later learned, Stalin in fact instructed the Central Committee of the KPD not to intensify its fight against the Merker/Peuke group.\*\*\*\* Ulbricht was thus forced to give up his attempt to have Merker expelled from the Party. The latter was merely relieved of his position as head of the trade Union Department, and Merker's followers in the Merker/Peuke group were forbidden to exercise their functions for the duration of one year.

5. At the SPD/KPD unification congress in April 1946, Merker, presumably in accordance with the wishes of Moscow but against the will of Ulbricht, was elected to the Central Committee of the SED. He returned from Mexico to Germany after the congress had terminated and was later appointed a member of the Politbureau. Relations between him and Ulbricht at first improved to a degree, but soon began to deteriorate.

6. The treatment meted out to Merker as a result of the Noel Field denouement has aroused strong feelings of disapproval among older Party members who consider Merker the conscience of the Party. In contradistinction to the majority of the members of the Central Committee, Merker had at all times displayed strength of character and had proved himself an industrious Party worker.\*\*\*\*\*

25X1A \* [REDACTED] Comment: Merker was previously reported as working as a waiter at the Restaurant Turnklaus.

25X1A \*\* [REDACTED] Comment: Inasmuch as Merker grew up in the catering business, the fact that he is now employed in a restaurant need not necessarily be construed as a deliberate slight.

25X1A \*\*\* [REDACTED] Comment: This seems to confirm the supposition that the Central Committee of the SED does not contemplate taking further steps against Merker for the time being.

25X1A \*\*\*\* [REDACTED] Comment: It must be doubted whether the telegram of the shop councils alone accomplished this reversal. More likely it was the intercession of Losowski, at that time the head of the Profintern, which prevented Merker's expulsion. Merker was one of Losowski's most trusted collaborators.

25X1A \*\*\*\*\* [REDACTED] Comment: Merker's personal history, as described in this report, would support the surmise that Moscow has not lost interest in him. There would otherwise be nothing to prevent his physical liquidation by Ulbricht. Ulbricht, in bringing about Merker's expulsion, has scored a limited success.

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